

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LONG HOLIDAY MUTES VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. FRIDAY APRIL 16 THROUGH TUESDAY APRIL 20 WAS HOLIDAY PERIOD FOR MOST GOVERNMENTAL AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES NORTHERN IRELAND. GOOD WEATHER FACILITATED TRAVEL AND THOUSANDS OF ULSTER PEOPLE VISITED BEACHES AND RESORTS. TRAFFIC DEATHS WERE UP, FIVE IN 1976 OVER 3 IN 1975. REPUBLICAN PARADES TO COMMEMORATE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF EASTER UPRISING PASSED GENERALLY PEACEFULLY ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SOME ROCK-THROWING BETWEEN REPUBLICAN AND LOYALIST MOBS BELFAST AND ONE INCIDENT BELFAST CEMETERY INVOLVING ARMY AND GROUP OF REPUBLICAN YOUTHS. NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE ESTIMATED PARADES AS SMALLER THAN OTHER YEARS. MAIN BELFAST/DUBLIN LINE BLOCKED FOR FIFTIETH TIME BETWEEN APRIL 19 AND 21 BY BOMB SOUTH ARMAGH WHICH FINALLY DEFUSED.

2. MOST SERIOUS CURRENT ISSUE INVOLVES AFTERMATH OF KILLING OF TWO OFF-DUTY PRISON GUARDS AND SHOOTING OF ANOTHER OUTSIDE CRUMLIN ROAD JAIL. FIFTEEN YEAR OLD MALE BEING HELD FOR LATTER ATTACK AND ALL INCIDENTS ATTRIBUTED TO PROVISIONAL IRA. PROVISIONALS HAVE THREATENED

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WARDERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND ON MAINLAND. AS CONSEQUENCE,

GUARDS IN INDUSTRIAL ACTION AT LONG KESH/MAZE HAVE REFUSED ALLOW CUSTOMARY WEEKLY VISITS OR REGULAR FOOD PARCELS TO PROVISIONAL PRISONERS. THESE ARE PRIVILEGES OF "SPECIAL CATEGORY" PRISONERS AND LOYALISTS IN SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS CONTINUE RECEIVE PRIVILEGES. NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE ATTEMPTING PERSUADE GUARDS END UNILATERAL ACTION AND DISCUSSIONS NOW UNDERWAY ON WHETHER OFF-DUTY GUARDS SHOULD BE ARMED FOR SELF-DEFENSE. SECRETARY OF STATE REES ATTRIBUTED PROVISIONAL IRA ATTACKS TO GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PHASE OUT SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS. PROVISIONALS ASCRIBE ATTACKS TO MISTREATMENT OF PRISONERS.

3. ARMY INSTALLATIONS CONTINUE BE TARGETS OF MORTAR ATTACKS AND ARMY FIND OF MORTAR "FACTORY" IN OFFICIAL IRA MARKETS AREA BELFAST APRIL 20 DOES NOT RPT NOT SEEM TO HAVE CURTAILED CAPABILITY TO LAUNCH ATTACKS.

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